

**SOCIALIST
ALTERNATIVE**

Crisis in the Middle East
page 8

SOCIALISM

IT'S YOUR PAPER

How the Socialist Paper is the Center of the Party



editors@SocialistAlternative.org

SOCIALIST  ALTERNATIVE

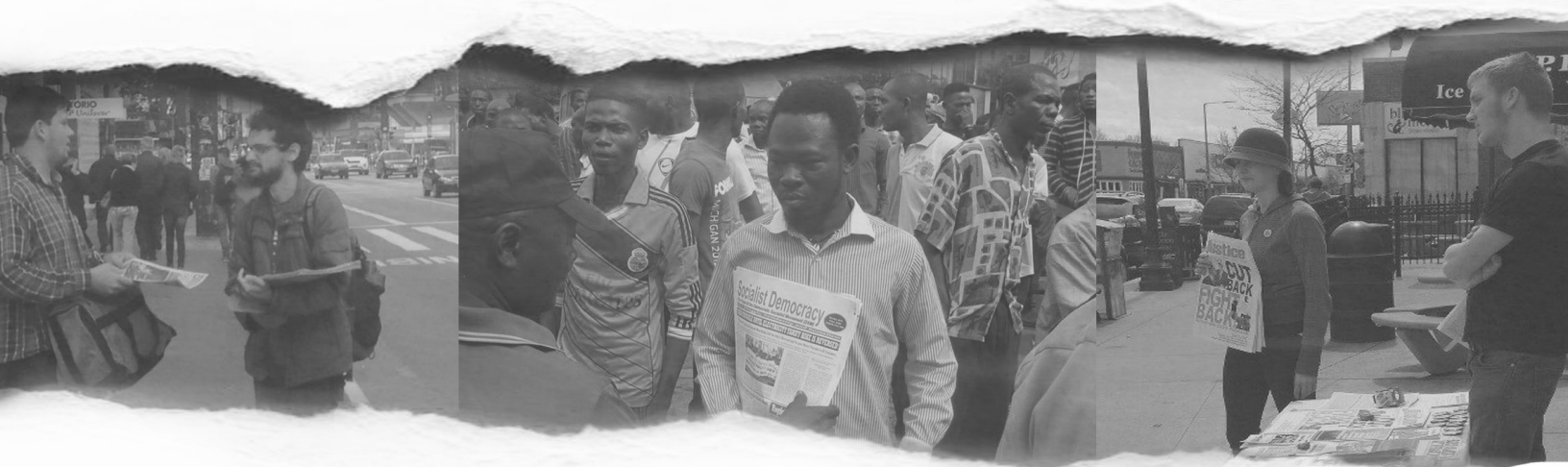
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SOCIALISM IS
ALTERNATIVE

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Introduction

In the wake of the deepest crisis capitalism has faced since the Great Depression there has been a broad shift to the left in American society. This is reflected in the increasing openness to socialism especially among young people; as well as overwhelming support for a \$15 minimum wage, increasing taxation on the rich and for progressive social reforms like marriage equality. This has fed directly into the enormous support for Bernie Sanders' presidential run where he has called for a "political revolution" against the billionaire class and popularized socialism to an audience of millions. It has also raised the question sharply of whether the Democrats can be somehow transformed into a party that serves the interests of working people or whether a new party of the 99% must be built. Socialist Alternative has been at the forefront of making the argument that Sanders' political revolution should continue and not be trapped within the confines of the corporate Democratic Party.

Since Occupy burst forth in 2011 in revolt against corporate domination and massive inequality, there has also been a reemergence of social struggle. The sharpest expression of this over the past two years has been the Black Lives Matter upsurge among black youth which has created a real crisis for the establishment particularly in a number of major cities. Even the growth of right populism which we have seen in recent months can be a spur to building a fightback on the streets in this highly polarized environment.

A National Platform

The past two years have witnessed the

transformation of Socialist Alternative. Kshama Sawant was elected in 2013, the first socialist council member in a major U.S. city in decades. This was followed by the successful fight for \$15 in Seattle in which Kshama and Socialist Alternative played a critical role. We have played a leading role on many other issues facing working people in Seattle, particularly in the fight for rent control and affordable housing. In 2015, we proved that a socialist could not only be elected but also re-elected. We raised an incredible \$500,000 and created a well-oiled working class machine to get out the vote. Now we are leading a grassroots campaign to get a \$15 minimum wage passed in Minneapolis. These campaigns and victories are a model for the development of independent left politics around the country.



Members of Boston Socialist Alternative selling the April 2016 paper

We are now the most visible socialist force in the country. We will soon reach 1,000 members but have the potential to go much further than this in the stormy period we are entering. Developing a cohesive Marxist party of thousands which can intervene effectively in events requires an active and educated membership. This points to the need for more theoretical and analytical material that can assist our collective political development. This must now be a priority for our Editorial Board.

Our work in Seattle and Kshama's re-election has also created a tremendous platform for us to intervene in national developments. We are demonstrating the capacity to reach a much wider national audience with our ideas. We first did this with Kshama's response to the State of the Union in 2014. But in recent months we have reached a broader audience in a much more sustained way through our Movement4Bernie initiative. At MarchForBernie – which we led in several cities – thousands came on the streets and heard us talk about socialism and building a party of the 99%. Kshama's article on Counterpunch entitled “The (un) Democratic Party: Why We Need a New Party of the 99%” on was viewed by shared over 10,000 times. As of early May, our petition calling on Bernie to run all the way to November as an independent has been signed by over 20,000 people. And Darletta Scrugg's takedown of Fox News host Neil Cavuto was viewed by millions.

As we are seeing 2016 is opening up a battle of ideas on the left. Presidential elections create a politicized atmosphere which socialists must seek to utilize. They can also create real challenges particularly in the form of “lesser evilism” which we have to combat. All of this points to the critical need to get our message out in every way possible.

In the next period, if we are to really become the leading force among the growing numbers of workers and youth who recognize that capitalism offers no future and want fundamental change, then we will have to take significant steps to develop our workers' media including first and foremost our paper but also our website and social media.



Members of our sister organization, Socialist Action (CWI - Hong Kong), use their paper to start conversations on the street.



Members of NYC Socialist Alternative selling the February 2016 paper

Moving to a Monthly Paper

Socialist Alternative has been a monthly publication for nearly two years. The increased frequency has allowed us to cover the rapid expansion of social struggle, particularly the fight for \$15 and Black Lives Matter and developments in the presidential election in a more timely way, though undoubtedly there have been points in the past period when we would rather have had a weekly!

Socialist Alternative has been sold on the streets of Ferguson and Baltimore, Chicago, and Minneapolis as BLM protests erupted; on the doorsteps in Seattle during Kshama's reelection campaign and at Bernie Sanders' massive rallies in state after state. During the week leading up to the caucuses in Washington state, we sold 800 papers in Seattle.

A few weeks later during the "Battle of New York," as the establishment went all out to crush the political revolution, we sold 500 papers at rallies in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn.

Since going monthly we have also significantly expanded our subscription base (we received over \$2,000 in online subscriptions in the first three months of 2015 alone) and have increased our online content to an average of an article a day. We have also set up a number of new sections on our website including a section for material in Spanish. Each month, we post several new articles in Spanish, either translations or original material.

The monthly paper has generated a lot of enthusiasm inside our rapidly-growing organization where the bulk of members have joined in the last two years. We have a wider range of comrades writing for the paper and the website than ever before.

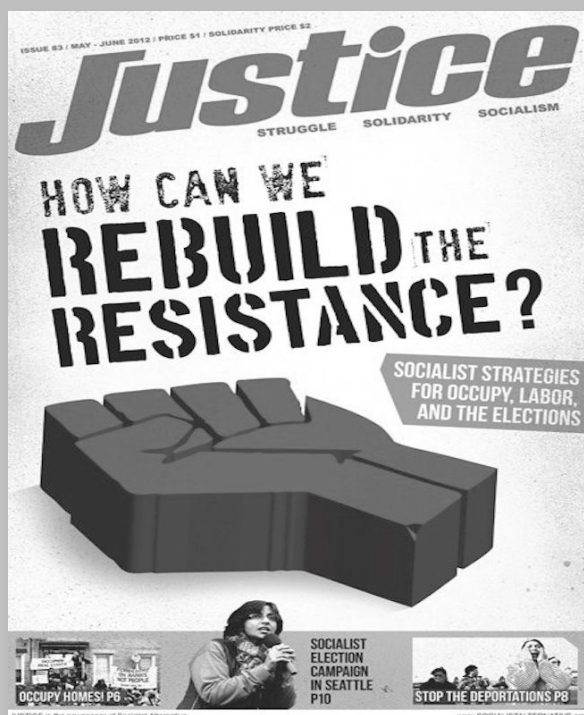
But this does not mean that we are where we need to be. We face a major challenge in trying to recreate a socialist culture centered around the use of our physical paper. The paper is a vital tool for an active, fighting organization where we seek to engage political conversations on street corners and on doorsteps in working class communities, in

workplaces, on campuses and at demonstrations. This is definitely an alien concept in the era of social media. But it is nevertheless essential for building the socialist movement; we cannot simply rely on internet contacts. It is also critical for uniting our far flung organization around a common line and approach in the complex political developments which are rocking the country.

Our National Committee has decided to make 2016 the "year of the paper" where we qualitatively expand our circulation through expanding our subscription base and get the bulk of our members involved in selling the paper on a regular basis. A key part of this will be the conscious use of targets in all the branches. This will also help to lay the financial foundation for further steps forward in developing the publications.

The purpose of this short pamphlet is to assist our branches in this effort by explaining more fully the role of the paper in a revolutionary organization, giving ideas for how to sell the paper effectively, making the process of writing for our publications more transparent and last but not least improving our use of social media.

Tom Crean - May 6th, 2016



It's Your Paper

BUILD A NATIONWIDE MOVEMENT
TO END POVERTY WAGES

Selling the paper during Kshama's reelection campaign

"At the doorsteps campaigning for Kshama Sawant, I never end any discussion on the doorstep without offering the paper: 'Would you want to get a copy of our newspaper?'"

Pitching the paper allows us me to link the immediate issue we're campaigning on to our socialist vision. I often say:

'For us, it's not just about this one election. The whole system is broken. The economy is broken. The political system is broken.'

'We want to build a whole new kind of politics that represents working people, not corporations. We need mass movements like the Fight for 15, independent candidates, and a whole new party that doesn't take corporate cash and offers us a tool to fight for our interests. Want to check it out?'

Many people have bought the paper from me on the doorsteps. Some people have even subscribed and signed up to join!"



Patrick Ayers
Seattle, WA

"The basis of a news story must be something lively and specific, as well as being timely - something that has just happened, that took place a day or two before or not long before. But the interesting facts can be noted and singled out only if the worker correspondent has a point of view."

-Trotsky in The Role of the Worker Correspondent



The Role of the Paper

To start we should restate the role of the print paper in a revolutionary socialist organization under the conditions which exist in the U.S. in the 21st century.

The purpose of our paper is not primarily to report news, nor is it an academic journal aiming simply to debate ideas in a vacuum.. Our paper is a campaigning paper. It is an indispensable tool to help fight for a socialist program and to build our organization.

On page two of the paper we list “What We Stand For”. Articles are carefully selected to take up key political issues, and the paper combines agitation around concrete demands with propaganda to flesh out our unique perspectives, program, and strategy to a wider audience. Our paper also plays a critical role in politically educating members and supporters. It is our most important tool for recruiting new members and helps unify our entire membership around a common political project.

“The newspaper can and should be the ideological leader of the party, evolving theoretical truths, tactical principles, general organisational ideas, and the general tasks of the whole party at any given moment.”

—Lenin from “What is to be Done?”

First and foremost the paper should act as the organization's “collective organizer.” The paper is produced by the Editorial Board which is appointed by and responsible to our Executive Committee, the day to day elected leadership of

Socialist Alternative. Each issue forces the Editorial Board, in consultation with the Executive Committee, to decide what are the key issues and struggles at the moment from our point of view and, flowing from that, our analysis, demands and next steps for the movement. Of course our audience in this is not just our membership or other activists but the working people and youth we can reach at protests or community paper sales.

The fact that there is very limited space in a 12-page monthly forces us to prioritize which issues we are going to highlight. This of course is not to say that the issues we choose are the only important ones and we can and do use our website to supplement the paper.

Moving to a monthly is helping make the paper more relevant to the work of the organization. For example, the paper and individual articles can be more easily integrated into branch discussions on current events and ongoing movements. Every month, a week after the paper comes out, each branch should have a 20 minute discussion during the business section of the meeting about the new issue. Comrades should discuss whether they think the mix of articles was right and whether particular articles make a coherent argument that will help the reader understand our program and draw socialist conclusions.

At every point, the key issue with our material is applying the transitional method: are we correctly gauging the consciousness of the audience we are addressing whether it be a section of the working class, radicalizing young people or activists in a struggle? Not all articles are addressed to the same audience.

We must then ask whether the points we make will resonate or whether we are unintentionally creating obstacles to people understanding what we mean.

The paper is meant to be a tool for dialogue and winning people to our ideas. But in a dialogue we must also listen and reflect on what people tell us about our line and our material. This is why reports from the experience of selling it are very important to send to the Editorial Board to help improve the next article and issue. We need your feedback to sharpen and hone our arguments so they can have the maximum effect on radicalizing workers and young people.

Every comrade should see they have a role in the strengthening of our paper as well as our website and increasing their reach. In order to streamline communication between branches and individuals and the Editorial Board have created a new email address:

Editors@SocialistAlternative.org

which Josh Koritz will monitor and help ensure that all queries are responded to in a timely way.

Each branch should elect a paper organizer. The paper organizer's role is to promote the role of our publications, centrally the paper, in the work of the branch. The paper organizer will make sure that the branch discusses each new issue of the paper of Socialist Alternative and will then compile a brief report for the Editorial Board based on that discussion. They will work to engage all members in actively selling the paper and will lead the drive to get all our members to subscribe to the paper. They will also have responsibility for identifying stories of interest for the paper or the website; identifying potential new authors, copy editors, etc.

Each branch should look for someone who has photography skills and can take good photos of protests, pickets, etc. The best pictures of actions show the energy and mood, along with the diversity of those participating. Pictures of banners and signs can be good, but have to also focus on the people holding the banner or sign. It's also good to get pictures that give some sense of the size of an action, especially if it's well attended.

LENIN ON THE ROLE OF THE PAPER

The Workers and Pravda

The chronicle of workers' life is only just beginning to develop into a permanent feature of Pravda. There can be no doubt that subsequently, in addition to letters about abuses in factories, about the awakening of a new section of the proletariat, about collections for one or another field of the workers' cause, the workers' newspaper will receive reports about the views and sentiments of the workers, election campaigns. The elections of workers' delegates, what the workers read, the questions of particular interest to them, and so on.

The workers' newspaper is a workers' forum. Before the whole of Russia the workers should

raise here, one after another, the various questions of workers' life in general and of working-class democracy in particular. The workers of St Petersburg have made a beginning. It is to their energy that the proletariat of Russia owes the workers' first daily newspaper after the grim years of social stagnation.

Let us, then, carry their cause forward, unitedly supporting and developing the workers' paper of the capital, the harbinger of the spring to come, when the whole of Russia will be covered by a network of workers' organisations with workers' newspapers. We, the workers, have yet to build this Russia, and we shall build it.

Extract, written by Lenin in August 1912.

Published in Pravda Collected Works. Vol. 18, pp300-301

Stop Trump

Selling the Paper

Left Political Alternative

Paper sales give us a reason to approach people with our politics, a tool to stop someone in the street or approach someone and start a political conversation with them. While social media is increasingly how people digest news and commentary, it cannot replace an in-person interaction that is so critical in politics.

Selling the newspaper in our communities, at workplaces, college campuses, and at weekly paper sales, offers us an opportunity to talk with people about politics and how the world can be changed. At each interaction we should strive to find out where people are at, the key issues on their minds and try to connect these to our analysis and elements of our program.

Every branch should strive to have a weekly paper sale, ideally with a table in a working class neighborhood.



Member of Boston SA selling the September 2015 paper.

The interactions we have with people are a vital part of developing our perspectives on how consciousness is changing. This link is decisive to developing a fighting program that both connects

with ordinary people and points the way forward.

Success at selling the newspaper and signing up new contacts increases as comrades gain confidence speaking to people about our politics. With practice comrades get better at explaining our arguments for independent political action, for building movements, and for a socialist transformation of society. But it must also be stressed that it is critical not just to speak to people but to listen carefully to what they have to say.

One question people frequently ask is:

Why not give it away for free?

For one thing, we can't afford to give it away. We get no corporate advertising. We aim to make the paper self-financing.

More importantly, we should always point out to people that our paper talks about the issues from a working class standpoint and for that reason we do not receive any corporate sponsorship through ads, etc. We believe that building a movement to change society and end the rule of the billionaires will require sacrifice and struggle. Asking for money is part of showing that we are serious and that we need the help of working people to develop our publications. And frankly, people are also more likely to read the paper if they paid for it.

Finally, asking for a donation for the paper can help us sift through the people we meet at a paper sale to identify who is worth discussing with further, who may be interested in joining Socialist Alternative and the struggle for a socialist society, and who just wants to talk.

HOW TO SELL THE PAPER

For some people, selling the paper on the street comes more easily than others. However, everyone can do it. Selling the paper is a skill we can all develop.

Every member is capable of building Socialist Alternative and selling the newspaper as part of that process.

No matter how shy, the more you find out about how capitalism is the root cause of the problems society faces and the more you agree with the need to build a revolutionary party to fight for socialism, the more you want to sell the paper.

Over time, through practice, discussions, and exchanging experiences and ideas, the more you

will become more comfortable with approaching people and offering them our paper.



Comrade in LSR (CWI in Brazil) selling their paper.

GENERAL TIPS

1. Sell the paper on our politics. People will be more interested if they know it has a unique political perspective to offer. It's also more likely to lead to an engaging discussion with the person. You can show them a particular article and discuss the political issues raised by it: "We have an article making the case for Bernie to run as an independent." You can also sell the paper on its more general politics: "Have you heard of Socialist Alternative? We think the economy and political system is rigged by big business. We campaign for mass movements, a new party of the 99%, and socialist policies. Would you like to check it out?"

2. Paper sales are a team effort! It's best to start each paper sale, whether at a table in a working class neighborhood, outside a workplace or at a large event, with a huddle of all members to set targets and discuss our approach. If we are setting up a table it is worth putting up signs with good clear slogans that will get people's attention. We should also, if possible, have buttons for sale. These get people to stop and are in themselves an excellent source of fighting fund.

3. Be persistent but not overly aggressive. Don't just stand back and wait for people to come to you. Approach people in a friendly manner, "Can I offer you a copy of our paper?" Know that not everyone you approach will buy the paper. Rejection is OK – it's a numbers game. The more people you offer the

paper to, the more you will sell, and the more conversations you will have about socialist ideas.

4. It's good to have an "edge" like a petition or campaign, but not necessary. We can engage people even if all we have is the paper. If we do have a campaign, make sure to use the paper! It's a tool to transition from the specific issue we're campaigning on to our broader socialist program, and to interest people in our party.

5. Assume support. Polls indicate that people are open to socialist ideas, especially youth and people of color. If you are confidently talking to someone about our ideas, they are more likely to listen than if you aren't sure.

6. Don't waste your time with people who just want to argue. You could end up missing the opportunity to talk to someone who is genuinely interested.

7. If they say yes, ask for "Any donation". The suggested donation is \$2. One member sold a paper for \$100!

8. Let people know we're a party they can join. Tell them about Kshama and any campaigns we're building. Get their contact information and ask them if you can give them a call to talk more. If they seem really interested, try to schedule a meeting on the spot..

Find the pace that's right for you, but do give it a shot.

What if there's not a place with a lot of foot traffic where you can set up a table?

It is absolutely true that some cities have more of a pedestrian culture than others and that in some places it is very difficult to find a place to set up a successful table.

In this situation we need to be more creative:

Is there a major workplace nearby where we could sell the paper at the beginning or the end of

the workday? This may even mean selling at the edge of a parking lot.

Malls or major transportation hubs are also worth investigating although obviously we will need to be on public space.

Is it possible to sell the paper door to door in a particular neighborhood?

We must also develop networks of people we know who will buy the paper although obviously we also want to turn them into subscribers.

From Labor Militant to Socialist Alternative

I have had the honor to write for, sell and promote the public face of our organization for 21 years. The importance of our paper flows from the standpoint of having a dialogue with the working class and poor, to test out our ideas, analysis and demands for consideration, adoption, action and verification.

To write for our newspaper has allowed me to develop and hone my skills as a writer, organizer and speaker. To translate the ideas and method of Marxism in plain language that workers and youth can understand, that will speak to their reality under capitalism and racism, playing a role in conjunction with events inspiring them to act in their own name for international socialism and workers' democracy.

To sell our newspaper is the greatest task and reward for all our political discussions on every level of our organization. This is where we learn how to listen and engage working people's consciousness and struggles. Some of the best moments I've had as an SA organizer have been during a community or workplace paper sale, receiving feedback, negative or positive from working people. Each conversation, allows us to speak the language of the working class.

Our paper is an instrument in the international workers' movement, it's a living and breathing organ that we shape through our participation

and activity in the struggle for socialism. We must be unrelenting in building an effective Socialist Alternative newspaper because today's crisis of capitalism is creating the present and future gravediggers of this insidious and diseased system of violence, poverty, racism and environmental destruction. Let's make sure every potential revolutionary worker and youth has on their kitchen table and bookshelf a copy of Socialist Alternative.



Eljeer Hawkins
New York, NY

Writing for the Paper

ANSWERING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who are the members of the Editorial Board and what is their role?

The current membership of the Editorial Board (EB) is George MF Brown, Tom Crean, Josh Koritz, Ty Moore, Calvin Priest, Jess Spear, Bryan Watson and Tony Wilsdon. Tom is the editor of the paper and Ty and Calvin are the web editors.

The EB's central task is the production of the paper. We produce an outline of the next issue in the first week of each month which is amended as we approach the date we send the paper to the printer (usually the 20th or 21st of the month).

All national material published in the name of Socialist Alternative must be approved by the EB or the Executive Committee although naturally different types of material require different levels of editorial oversight. For example a report from a demonstration is far more straightforward than an analysis of a major political development.

Where do ideas for article come from and how does the EB decide which stories to publish?

Many ideas and proposals are generated at the weekly meetings of the EB. Ideas are also submitted by branches and individual comrades.

At any given point we have to clearly prioritize what will be the key issues and developments to which we devote editorial resources. Our EB

members also play other roles in the work of the organization and this can limit the resources we have at any given moment. There are many excellent ideas which we are not able to follow up. And it can also happen that we do not feel that a particular article proposal will work or will simply require editorial resources that can't be spared at that time.

Again any comrade can submit a proposal or a written piece to the EB. It is our obligation to reply in a timely way.

“The first thing is to examine yourself rigorously: What do I want to talk about? For whom? And why? This is a precondition for anything else. The question of how to write is also of enormous importance, but it has to come second.”

-Trotsky in The Role of the Worker Correspondent

I have not written for the paper – what is the best way to get started?

One option is to discuss with your branch organizer or paper organizer about writing a report on a demonstration or key issue or development in your area. One thing our paper and website needs more of are short articles of this type which show that we are present and active across the country. It helps to make our organization more attractive to people in the South, the Midwest or any other part of the US when they see material about developments near to where they live.

We have also launched a new feature entitled “Workers’ Lives” both in the paper and the website where comrades (or non-comrades) can describe their experience of the joys of working under capitalism and how much they adore their bosses (pseudonyms may be necessary). Here is what we’re looking for:

Describe the nature of the work.

What are the problems facing people in your workplace (low pay, long hours, lack of healthcare, working conditions)?

Is there a union? Are you active in it? Does the union effectively mobilize workers on the job? Are there examples of people resisting attempts to squeeze more worker out of them, unsafe conditions, sexist or racist managers, etc?

For the paper we need to keep these pieces under 500 words; for the website we can go up to 800.

A third option is to write a review of a movie, book or TV series - but get in touch with us before you start writing!

I have been asked to write for the paper or my proposal was accepted – what is the process?

A member of the EB will be assigned to work with you. For articles intended for the paper, the EB member will provide an outline, more or less detailed depending on the nature of the piece. Once your draft is submitted, you will receive comments and suggestions for editing or, if necessary, reworking sections of the article.

In-depth pieces and important articles on political developments or social struggles are then sent to the EB as a whole for review. This can lead to further amendments.

If you are writing for the paper it can happen that an article will go through several drafts which can be a challenging process but is often necessary to hone our message. At the same time we want the voice of our members to come through in the finished product. Please be patient and open to discussing and putting in more work after the first draft is done.

What is the usual deadline for material in the paper?

In general we try to commission articles two weeks in advance of when they are due. Of course when events occur quickly, the deadline may be shorter, sometimes significantly shorter.

What else should a writer be doing?

Writers should be on the lookout for strong images to illustrate their piece. If the article is a report on a local struggle or protest it would be good if we had our own image. As already pointed out each branch should try to identify and develop a branch photographer.

Writers should also try to think of a good headline for their piece. Your ideas are often better than ours!

“When you write, picture to yourself, as clearly as you can, how your article would sound being read aloud in your own shop at the factory, or in the one next to yours or in some other plant nearby.”

-Trotsky in The Role of the Worker Correspondent

LENIN: On Workers Writing for the Paper

It is a misconception that writers and only writers (in the professional sense of the term) can successfully contribute to a publication; on the contrary, it will be vital and alive only if for five leading and regularly contributing writers there are five hundred or five thousand contributors who are not writers. One of the shortcomings of the old Iskra, one which I always tried to rid it of (and which has grown to monstrous proportions in the new Iskra) was that too little was done for it from Russia. We always used to print everything, practically without exception, that we received from Russia. A really live organ should print only a tenth of what it receives, using the rest as material for the information and guidance of the journalists. We must have as many party workers as possible correspond with us, correspond in the ordinary, not the journalistic sense of the term.

Isolation from Russia, the engulfing atmosphere of the accursed émigré slough, weighs so heavily on one here that living contact with Russia is our only salvation. Let all remember that we want in fact, and not just in word, to consider (and to make) our organ the organ of the entire "majority", the organ of the mass of Russian comrades. Let everyone who regards this organ as his own and who is conscious of the duties of a Social-Democratic Party member abandon once and for all the bourgeois habit of thinking and acting as is customary towards legally published papers – the habit of feeling: it is their business to write and ours to read. All Social-Democrats must work for the Social-Democratic paper. We ask everyone to contribute, and especially the workers. Give the workers the widest opportunity to write for our paper, to write as much as they possibly can about their daily lives, interests, and work - without such material a Social-Democratic organ will not be worth a brass farthing and will not deserve the name. In addition, please send us private letters,

not intended as contributions to the paper, ie, not for publication, but by way of comradely intercourse with the editors and to keep them informed, and not only about facts and incidents, but about the prevailing sentiment and the everyday, "uninteresting" humdrum, routine side of the movement. People who have not lived abroad cannot imagine how much we need such letters (there is absolutely nothing secret about them either, and to write such an uncoded letter once or twice a week is really something the busiest person can do). So write to us about the discussions at the workers' study circles, the nature of these discussions, the subjects of study, and the things the workers ask about; about the state of propaganda and agitational work, and about contacts among the general public, in the army, and among the youth; above all write about any dissatisfaction the workers feel with us Social-Democrats, about the things that trouble them, about their suggestions, criticisms, etc.

Matters relating to the practical organisation of the work are particularly interesting now, and there is no way of acquainting the editors with them except by a lively correspondence not of a journalistic nature, but simply of a comradely kind. Of course, not everyone has the ability or inclination to write, but... don't say "I can't", say "I don't want to"; given the desire, one or two comrades who could write can be found in any circle, any group, even the smallest, even the most minor (the minor groups are often especially interesting, for they sometimes do the most important, though inconspicuous, part of the work).

Collected Works. Vol. 7, pp523-528

Written on 29 November (12 December) 1904, published in leaflet form in December 1904

It's Your Paper Testimonials

"The other day my newly formed Dorchester branch had our regularly scheduled paper sale at the JFK T stop. The comrade bringing the table was unable to make it and so it was just me and someone else with a back pack full of newspapers. We were going to just sit around and wait for branch but we figured to just sell some papers. It is always more difficult without a table and some signs with catchy slogans and buttons. This is the station where the UMASS students are and college kids love buttons. But we tried anyways. Trump was on the front of the paper so we were leading with Stop Trump's racism, check out a socialist newspaper.

A man that was about 60 came up and so I asked him to buy a copy. He called me some awful names and talked about how horrible I was because I was "a communist that supported murderers". I told him that was not the case. He yelled that his wife was from Czechoslovakia and so "he knew." I began to ignore him but he kept going. This wasn't the first time something like this had happened but he just would not go away. I finally asked him if he would leave me alone and he

"Our branches recently attended a #Justice4Jamar rally against the county attorney's decision to not prosecute the two police officers responsible for the shooting death of Jamar Clark. While discussing this outrageous injustice with people at the rally we also asked them to get involved in 15 Now Minneapolis and to check out Socialist Alternative.

I approached a protester during the march that followed the rally. I presented the 15 Now petition, and she eagerly signed, citing the tough time she and her two sons have had finding decent paying jobs. But she also expressed regret that she could not volunteer as much as she would like to, given that she lives far from the neighborhoods where the upcoming ballot campaign will operate.

The march was ending and I had to leave, but I felt like, given her strong support for \$15, she might be interested in SA, so I quickly presented the March issue of the paper (Issue #21) to show her the article on the fight for \$15. As I turned a few pages, an article on homelessness in Seattle ("Capitalism Creates Homelessness") as well as an article on Clinton's brand of feminism ("Bernie Versus Hilary: What's a Feminist to Do?") caught her eye. She asked if she could take the paper home with her. The paper's headlines sold themselves.

said I was a typical communist because I wanted to "take away his free speech." The bus loads of kids kept coming and I kept on with the paper. After an hour I sold 7 papers for 30 bucks and got 4 contacts!

That old man watched me. He got real upset when a young man handed me a twenty dollar bill and his email address. But that is ok. Because seven people are going to read about the ideas of socialism, and hopefully they will come to a meeting. But I never would have met them if we hadn't just stood outside and sold the paper."



Toiya Shester
Boston, MA

In the final minutes I had before I had to go, she gave me her contact info and said she would like to check out the paper and think about the politics. I asked her if it was okay to send an email to follow up with her about considering membership in SA. She said that would be fine, adding that she would definitely read the paper.

I emailed her the day after the rally. A week later her reply came back. She wanted to meet for a contact discussion. During our meet-up, one of the first things she said was that she had read the entire paper. We then had a wide-ranging conversation about homelessness, Hilary Clinton's anti-worker record and the need for building mass working class movements to address the problems we had just outlined. The paper had seeded the discussion at many turns. At the end of our conversation, she agreed to join and handed me cash dues. Thinking about the role of the paper in this attempt to find a contact, I was impressed by the way its effectively politicized titles and clear layout assisted me during a moment of clumsiness."

James Hardwig
Minneapolis, MN

Our Website

MARKISM REVOLUTION CONTACT US LOG IN

FIGHT RACISM SEXISM INEQUALITY FOR SOCIALISM

Join SA

DONATE

PUBLICATIONS +

EN ESPAÑOL

CONTACT US

The Revolutionary Socialist Website - SocialistAlternative.org

Nothing can replace the revolutionary newspaper as an effective tool to reach people with our ideas and recruit them to the socialist movement but we also need to have a regularly updated website as more and more working class people and youth look to social media and the internet for news and commentary.

We aim to make our website the go-to place for socialist analysis of current events, history, and culture. It also serves as a storehouse from which we can share our pamphlets, other publications, and materials. All articles from our newspaper are also posted on the website. And, since the website, unlike the paper, has no space limits, we can post longer analyses and items that could not be published in the paper (such as long reviews on movies, books, or reports from events we attend). Nevertheless we strive to keep all our articles from becoming too long.

Writing reports for the website

The website also doubles as a recruiter. Since Kshama Sawant was elected in 2013 we've had a much higher local and national profile than ever before, which has led to thousands of people looking up Socialist Alternative, visiting the website, and many of them clicking the "Join SA" link. But one barrier to joining is that many people do not realize that we are an organization you can join, that we are an activist organization with hundreds of dedicated members all across the US,

building the socialist movement in our workplaces, college campuses, and communities.

This is why reports from national events, with an overall introduction, are requested and published. They showcase the work we do all across the country and also provide a snapshot of the mood and politics of social movements.

Tips for writing reports

1. Before attending a major event, it is the responsibility of the branch leadership to decide who is going to write the report, and then to look over the report (as quickly as possible) before sending it to the website.
2. The reports should be written for a broad audience – crucial points to report are the mood, the slogans, tactics used, next steps discussed, etc. (see example below). Information on how many papers were sold and how many contacts we met is important for internal discussion, but will generally be cut from reports before they're published online.
3. Reports should be succinct (usually 150-200 words), include pictures (high quality) and videos if possible.
4. The reports should be sent to the Editorial Board at Editors@SocialistAlternative.org.

Example Report

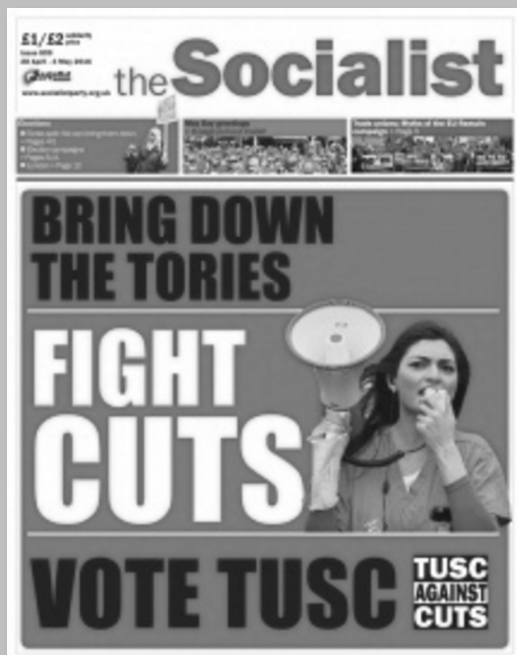
"On Tuesday evening, November 25, over a thousand people gathered in Union Square to demand justice for Michael Brown. Frustration with the status quo reached a boiling point as people shut down the Lincoln Tunnel (tunnel between NY and NJ), FDR Drive (one of NYC's main highways), and other major highways throughout New York City.

Members of Socialist Alternative successfully rallied, marched, led chants, and opened up a broader conversation about combating police brutality, racism, and capitalism with clear demands. Student groups, community organizations, and labor unions made up a large portion of the massive crowd. Throughout the evening, low-wage workers in various corporate chains along the route raised their fists from behind counters and windows. The link between racism, police repression, and economic exploitation permeated the consciousness of both participants in the march and supportive bystanders."



Socialist Alternative website

Paper of the Socialist Party (CWI in the UK)



Paper of Linkse Socialistische Partij (CWI in Belgium)



Social Media

Socialist Alternative
Revolutionary Organization

with KSHAMA SAWANT

Sign Up Liked Message ...

Many people, young people especially, now get their news largely from social media: Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Google+ just to name a few. With effective social media, our material can reach tens of thousands of people who we'd otherwise not be able to reach. We can also use social media for other important purposes, such as getting donations or building local events.

Our social media should demonstrate the seriousness of our organization, amplify our victories, and create a reach for our political ideas that goes far beyond our existing support base. We have recruited several members whose first contact with SA was through our social media, including in areas of the country where we have no method of in-person recruitment.

One advantage of our organizational methods is that we are able to make decisions and then concentrate our resources together for the maximum possible impact. The Editorial Board will be spearheading ways that we can expand the

reach of our material on social media sites, particularly by asking comrades across the country to share and retweet articles - there by giving a "signal boost" to our analysis.

Especially when major events break out, our political analysis can spread well beyond our normal reach, and in some cases gain viral attention - to name a few: Kshama's response to the 2014 State of the Union address, Darletta's Fox News smackdown, and Kshama's recent article on Counterpunch. In the days following the SOTU response, we received the biggest flood of internet contacts in our organization's history to that point.

Our campaigns, through their own social media accounts, are perhaps the best examples of our social media work and the potential that exists to build professional online presence. During our 2015 primary campaign in Seattle, the Vote Sawant Twitter account had over 600,000 "impressions," or the number of unique interactions on their twitter feed.

SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE

As members of Socialist Alternative, social media is a political activity. We should be skillful in the process of following current events and writing up brief and sharp political commentary, even if it's just selecting which quote from our article to feature when you share it.

We all play a pivotal role in how much traction our organization makes on social media, as the more shares our posts have, the further they will reach. Whenever possible, share SA articles from the SA Facebook page or Twitter profile, rather than posting them as links. This increases the likelihood

that people will click back on our Socialist Alternative page and get more updates from it.

For revolutionaries, social media can be a crucial tool for reaching working class people with our ideas and to appeal for them to join us. But, it is not a substitution for our other tasks, methods, or for the democratic function of our branches. Members are asked to refrain from internal discussion on social media, as it is not a democratic structure and can harm our organization. Any questions members have about our program, position on certain issues, a position our public officials and spokespeople take, and so on should be discussed primarily within our branch meetings and structures.

Facebook — General Strategies

We should have two goals when thinking about our Facebook presence in a political way: first, increasing the readership of articles, videos, and memes posted by the national page. Second, how building a local periphery of people who we can engage and will attend our events.

All comrades should go to Facebook/SocialistAlternativeUSA and, under the “Like” button, make sure to “Like” our page and choose “See First” so that all comrades always see the material we post. This way you will always see new and interesting articles in your feed. When you see a post, make sure to like it and share it. Sharing works best when you write your own short introduction explaining why your friends would like it, and/or what you find interesting or compelling.

Twitter — General Strategies

Twitter has changed hugely in the past few years. There are some communities that still use it as a means of national communication, and there is the chance that it will be taken up again during movements, particularly because it does not have the same limiting algorithms that Facebook has to control what exactly you see.

A few guides:

- Follow reporters, not news outlets. At times we can get coverage for events, or get the attention of a reporter through tweeting at them. Always keep it professional and courteous – don’t try to guilt people into covering the story.
- Engage with people. If someone writes something interesting, ask a question, make a comment.
- Use hashtags (#). Hashtags are used to aggregate topics across the whole twitter-verse.

Instagram — General Strategies

The feed algorithms for Instagram are less restrictive than Facebook. However, it is more difficult to create a following on Instagram than Facebook or Twitter. Consider using it as a way to

When your branch creates a local event page, invite all your friends (Facebook makes this easy now), and post the event in local groups, or on local pages, making sure to explain why that group or page would find the event interesting. Re-share the event once every few days and ask comrades in the area, and friends to re-share and like it.

Small amounts of money can be used to boost posts in Facebook. This should be considered as a way for branches to specifically boost events. The back end of this allows you to target age and geographic areas to tailor the reach to people most likely to attend. Make sure your event has an image (without too much text), is clearly written, and has some attendees already before boosting. Usually \$20 is enough to reach over 1,000 people and \$50 can get you to 5,000 depending on settings.

If you search for #BlackLivesMatter you will see a conversation going on about the movement, which you can join by using that hashtag. Sometimes hashtags are also used for emphasis, or signifying something in the tweet that you think should be a common experience or sentiment (ex. #sorrynotsorry).

- Comment or even live-tweet at events. Live-tweeting is when you attempt to, in real time, let twitter followers know what is happening as it happens, 140 characters at a time. This can be difficult without a computer, but if other people are there, it is a way to get followers.
- If you are at an event that others are live-tweeting, interact with them. Write tweets that are observations and tag the people live-tweeting in them. Reply and interact with the other people tweeting about the event.

quickly post photos to Facebook and Twitter simultaneously. Also, follow local photographers and activists, you may learn about protests or events you didn’t hear about in time to attend.